



Catherine Le Tissier and Nick Drayson

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Location: Argentina



What we do: Nick is Primate of the Province of South America and Bishop of Northern Argentina. Catherine coordinates the AMARE women's organisation across the Province.

Dear friends,

It is not every day that over a thousand bishops and their spouses get together, so I make no apology for dedicating this edition of our news for prayer to the recent Lambeth Conference held in Canterbury in August. I hope it will be of interest, because it is bound to affect, either directly or indirectly, the ongoing work in Northern Argentina that you so faithfully pray for. So, at the risk of sounding irrelevant, here is a behind-the-scenes glimpse of an event which has been several years in the making, and which by all accounts is set to continue for another year or two!

We set off for England with great anticipation, plus a certain amount of trepidation, and arrived a few days before the Conference. Catherine visited family in the Channel Islands while I went to a retreat of the newly formed Commission for Evangelism and Discipleship in London. We read the preparatory notes for the Lambeth Conference, and discovered that if we tested positive for COVID, we could watch the proceedings from our room. Catherine tested positive on arrival, and so spent the first five days in isolation! The sessions were live-streamed, though sadly she did miss the retreat at the start.

The event was an impressive achievement, catering for over 1500 people of all nationalities, with the minimum of fuss. There were two parallel programmes (one for bishops and one for their spouses) with interpretation into seven languages, with some overlap, but mainly geared to the needs of each group. The common thread running through everything was the letter of 1 Peter, and the theme of being God's Church for God's World. Wonderful international worship, good meals, plenaries and small groups, seminars and fringe activities, and even a day out in London ending with a cruise on the Thames, all well organised and presented.

Obviously the main "activity" was the networking and conversations with so many old and new friends from many countries. Many of us had never met in person but had for several years been meeting online! Others were relationships that went way back. But for most it was above all the novelty and exciting challenge of negotiating the brave new world (including how to get around the campus, and the programme!).

So, what issues were we tackling and what will come out of the meetings, apart from rich relationships? In groups and all together, we drafted 12 "Calls" which will in due course be sent out to and from bishops and churches. Most are outward-looking, recognising the great need for the Church to be serving others and taking



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seriously its ability to relate worldwide and formulate some ways forward in the light of the power of the gospel.

The calls are: Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, Sustainable Development, Care for the Environment, Unity, Other Faiths, Anglican Identity, Intentional Discipleship and Science and Faith. These include much detail, some very practical challenges and suggestions, and some controversial things. We certainly won't be at a loss for what to do in the next few years!

There were some outstanding talks and discussions, and some memorable moments. The example and leadership of Justin Welby, and his wife Caroline, was inspiring. And nobody pretended that we all agreed – we were rather encouraged to love one another in the face of differences. The testimony of brother and sister bishops (and their

spouses) from other contexts was encouraging, and there were many reasons to be positive, despite some of the criticisms levelled from the sidelines.

So, was it worth all the effort? I am sure our local group of bishops would say yes, as it not only brought them into contact with others, but into closer fellowship as Latin Americans. I think it will have its effect locally too as teaching and ideas are shared with churches and leaders in the Chaco and around the diocese. We constantly need to be reminded that God loves us, and that he calls us as a Church to serve his world. It was a fascinating experience to accompany our two indigenous bishops, Crisanto and Mateo, in what for them was such a strange environment! They were pleasantly surprised to find so many other bishops, and concluded that the Anglican Church need not die out when the missionaries leave!

So what happens next? Now we are back in Northern Argentina, we have lots of local business! We have just finished a diocesan synod, with over 200 people participating, and set in motion the search for my successor with the appointment of a nominating committee. Diocesan council has also been renewed.

In the next few weeks we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Chorote New Testament with the distribution of the audio version, a film of Luke's gospel, and a dictionary. This is closely followed by an Indigenous Congress, involving leaders from Argentina, Paraguay and Chile plus numerous visitors.

We are simultaneously beginning to develop the vision for the Mission where we live in Juárez, with the formation of a small community headed up by AMARE. The months are getting hotter, and there is a desperate need for rain.

In August we enjoyed a short visit from Stefi, following completion of her MA, and we pray for her as she seeks work! Sam has just started a new job too, so it is all change for the family.

Please pray for the transition of the next few months, the farewells as well as the new things starting up, and especially for those who are daring to take initiative, and pour new wine into new wineskins.

Our love to you all, Nick and Catherine



Photos from top to bottom: South Americans at Canterbury; environmental awareness; Catherine speaking at a seminar on sustainable development; Caroline and Justin Welby



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